

JAMES A. SLATER, HERPETOLOGY'S LOSS, HEMIPTEROLOGY'S GAIN

RICHARD M. BARANOWSKI

Tropical Res. & Educ. Ctn., 18905 SW 280th St., Homestead, Florida 33031

James Alexander Slater has been, and still is, interested in ornithology (annually participates in the Christmas bird count) and herpetology (witness the snakes, tortoises, and turtles in his den). Although he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in entomology, he strongly considered continuing his education in herpetology. So much so that he participated in reptile collecting trips in Louisiana. Fortunately for us he was offered a teaching instructorship in entomology, a lucrative (?) offer that a married graduate student couldn't turn down!

Jim actively pursues two hobbies, in addition to his interests in entomology. One is a study of burying grounds, gravestones, and gravestone carvers in Connecticut. During the course of pursuing this "hobby," often accompanied by his wife Betty, he visited more than two hundred burying grounds, many several times. This study resulted in the publication of a very fine book, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut* (Archon Books, 1987). The first part of the book defines the major categories of eastern Connecticut burying grounds, who the carvers were, whose stones are in the burying grounds, what they carved and how their carvings may be recognized. The second part of the book describes the burying grounds, provides detailed directions for finding them and notes what particularly unusual stones may be found. In pursuing this work Jim applied his long experience in observation and analysis as an insect taxonomist to the problems of determining the origins of stones for which there is little or no written documentation. The book also has many outstanding photographs of gravestones by Daniel and Jessie Lie Farber.

His second hobby, not altogether unexpected of a systematist, is collecting milk-glass. I can recall going on a "collecting trip" with Jim and Betty on a cold, rainy late fall day to a unique habitat, near Brimfield, Massachusetts, which they were sure would yield many new specimens. To me this unique habitat appeared to be a cow pasture (ample evidence) filled with row upon row of booths and vehicles loaded with whatever comes out of New England attics that collectors of all taxa might be interested in. By late afternoon the trip, I guess, could be called a success since a few boxes of various milkglass specimens were carried home. I'm sure that the Slater milkglass collection has several hundred pieces, including some quite scarce. Interestingly, Jim can, of course, inform you of the collecting details just as he can of the insect specimens he has collected in many parts of the world.

Over the past 30–35 years, I have collected with Jim in many places ranging from the northeast United States to many of the islands in the Caribbean. Many amusing and some not so amusing incidents might be recalled. I will mention a few.

A trip to several Caribbean islands, along with Dr. B. Jane Harrington who was at that time one of Jim's students, has many recollections. On Martinique we stayed in an 18th century manor house, the *Manoir de Beauregard*. Here we found a novel use for a fixture not common in U.S. bathrooms—the bidet. With modifications it

was a convenient place to soak grimy field clothing. We were accompanied part of the time on Martinique by Dr. Lucas Gruner. One day after a morning's collecting, Lucas directed us to a corrugated tin building on a lovely beach. Here, after a wait of perhaps an hour, we were served an excellent bouillabaisse on a crude wooden table under coconut palms. It was indeed difficult to continue collecting after such a meal. Travelling on to Guadeloupe, we were also escorted by Dr. Gruner most of the time. One of our collecting trips was up the volcano, La Soufriere. The road ends at a car park at La Savne a Mulets, at an elevation of 3,300 ft. The vegetation at this altitude is sparse as well as being wet due to the cloud cover. I don't recall collecting being particularly good, only being cold. In Point a Pitre we did take time to visit the market at the corner of rue Frebault and rue Thiers. A deep fragrance of a Creole market permeated the place. Local Creole women in madras turbans make deals over the produce they sell. The bright fabrics they wore competed with the rich colors of the papayas, bananas, pineapples, oranges and mangoes.

Dominica brings to mind a guest house, Castle Comfort, where we feasted on mountain chicken or crapaud (frog legs) and highly seasoned land crabs. While on Dominica we took time out to visit a mission school for girls which specialized in the production of woven grass items. There Jim, decided to buy a straw hat to take the place of a field hat that should have been discarded years ago. We left with Jim proudly wearing his new hat and smiling at the lilted voices of the girls singing over their weaving. When we later called at the Institute of Jamaica in Kingston to visit Tom Farr and see the collection, Jim was wearing his new hat. The day was hot and all of us were perspiring during the drive to Kingston. Upon our arrival we were greeted by Tom and taken to the insect collection room. Jim took off his hat and began to examine the material while conversing with Tom. Jim's new hat had a magenta head band that left a wide streak on his forehead! We thought it rather amusing and didn't tell Jim about it for some time! I have often wondered why Tom didn't say anything.

Later, on Jamaica, after collecting most of the day out of Linstead, we drove to Mandeville in central Jamaica in search of the Mandeville Hotel. On the way we purchased fresh fruit from a roadside stand. We found the hotel after dark. There was no one there, but the woman who evidently operated it was in a building next door. She told us to take any of the rooms (Should this have told us something?). We entered into a large room that evidently served as a lounge having scattered chairs and a few coffee tables. The bedrooms opened off of this room. After taking care of the collected material and recording the daily field notes, we retired. All night, the sounds of armies of rats scurrying about were evident; in the morning the fruit we had placed on the table was gone. Needless to say we departed in the morning. The last stay in Jamaica was at the Bamboo Lodge, in the Blue Mountains, overlooking Kingston. Joan Angus, the gruff manageress, took good care of the strange collectors. One evening she served a soursop drink as a special treat. The taste is quite unusual. Most of it was surreptitiously poured over the rail of the porch where we were dining. The next morning we found a thick white stain where it had run onto the sidewalk. It was promptly cleaned up before Joan was aware of the fate of her drink. One morning, again as a favor, Joan served something special for breakfast—kippered herring. The taste was good, but the staring eye difficult to take. I think Jim ended up covering his with a napkin and eating toast and coffee!

A few years later we took another trip to the islands accompanied by two of Jim's graduate students, Veronica Picchi and Flavia O'Rourke. I recall one day when Jim was driving on St. Lucia, we had to stop because of a large bus trying to turn around on what was a very narrow road with a steep vertical drop on one side. Jim left the car to see what progress the bus driver was making. As soon as he left the car Veronica and Flavia implored me to drive. I asked them why and they replied that everytime Jim spoke to them in the back seat of the car, he turned to face them, taking his eyes off of the road. Several months ago I visited Jim and Betty, in Connecticut, for a few days. One day we drove into Willimantic and Jim turned to say something to Betty. Her response was not the same, but Jim's habit is!

I have continued to collect actively in the Caribbean, sometimes alone and sometimes with others, but those collecting trips with Jim are among the most fondly remembered. In addition to these memories, they produced many interesting specimens, particularly in the rhyparochromine lygaeid genus *Ozophora* on which I have continued to work with Jim over the years.